THE DIRECT SUPPORT SYSTEM

1. Introduction. The basic mission of the DoD logistics system is to support military personnel in the field with what is needed, when, where, and in the condition and quantity required, at a minimum expenditure of resources. This lesson will focus on the Army's materiel distribution system named the Direct Support System (DSS). This system is designed to provide increased supply support to the customer in the field. The lesson will address the requisitioning and issue cycle with emphasis being placed on the delivery of selected items of supply from the Continental United States (CONUS) depot to the ultimate consumer, either in CONUS or overseas.

2. Objectives. After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

a. Identify the basic objectives of DSS and describe how they are accomplished.

b. Describe DSS as a physical distribution system.

c. Explain how the Air Line of Communication (ALOC) augments the DSS.

d. Recognize the advantages and disadvantages DSS has over previous distribution systems.

e. Discuss the impact DSS has on logistics functions.

3. References.

a. AR 725-50, Requisitioning, Receipt, and Issue System.

b. FM 38-725, Direct Support System (DSS) and Air Line of Communications (ALOC).

4. History of Army Supply Methods.

a. CONUS Installation support.

(1) Before the implementation of DSS, most CONUS installations process materiel requests through an installation supply division (ISD). The ISD operated its own intermediate supply level stockage point which was, in effect, a miniature depot for the installation. When processing a request, the ISD audited it for authorization and funding, recorded the demand, and then took one of these actions:

(a) The materiel was released from installation stock if it was on hand.

(b) If materiel was not on hand, a requisition was passed to a CONUS inventory control point (ICP) and a due-out was issued to the requestor.

(2) Requests for materiel always passed through the ISD for units/activities located on the installation. When materiel was received at the installation, it also passed through the ISD. Only high-priority requisitions were delivered directly to the requesting unit.

b. Outside CONUS support. The field support system for units located outside CONUS consisted of a series of supply echelons storing various items. The majority of requests were filled directly from overseas field depots to their supported units. Requisitions were passed back to CONUS ICPs only to replenish stocks in the field depot. High-tonnage items, where consumption could be accurately predicted, such as fuel and subsistence, were distributed directly to the General Support Unit (GSU) or Direct Support Unit (DSU) and did not pass through the field depot. This procedure, called throughput, is currently used for distributing these types of items.

5. Objectives of DSS. DSS is designed to accomplish the following:

a. Improve supply responsiveness by reducing order ship time (OST).

b. Reduce or eliminate intermediate level inventories, thereby reducing the value of stock in the distribution pipeline.

c. Improve visibility of requisitions and intransit materiel by using state-of-the-art procedures.

d. Maintain unit materiel readiness.

e. Operate in peacetime the same supply distribution system that will be used in wartime.

6. The Current Army DSS. The DSS is the Army's standard supply distribution system for moving materiel through an expedited pipeline as far forward as possible to the requisitioning unit; e.g., a DSU. This concept requires supplies to be moved from the CONUS wholesale depot directly to the requisitioning customer, bypassing overseas field storage activities and CONUS ISDs. Materiel moving through the DSS has a significantly reduced OST when compared to the normal Uniform Materiel Movement and Issue Priority System (UMMIPS) times. Air Line of Communication (ALOC) and Remote Area Support (RAS) are subsystems of the basic DSS standard distribution system.

a. **Air Line of Communication. ALOC provides scheduled air delivery of selected air eligible repair parts (class IX) and medical supplies (class VIII) to overseas Army combat service support units.** Excess and reparable parts being retrograded to CONUS may return on empty aircraft used to transport cargo overseas. The major goals of ALOC are 1-day processing through military aerial ports and 1-day delivery to the final overseas destination. The quickest and most economical means of delivering ALOC cargo overseas is by using dedicated military aircraft and trucks. Military truck units, assigned to the aerial ports of debarkation, transport cargo as soon as it is unloaded from the aircraft to enable 24-hour, 7-day a week delivery. More recently, commercial transportation is being used to augment the Defense Transportation System.

b. Remote Area Support. RAS supports isolated regions not serviced by surface carriers on a frequent basis, or where service is so ineffective that support is inadequate. RAS regions must have an Air Mobility Command supported channel and support by RAS must be approved by Department of the Army.

7. DSS Materiel. Materiel moving through the DSS must qualify for containerization and includes the following:

a. Class II--Individual clothing and equipment, tools and toolkits, administrative and housekeeping supplies.

b. Class III--Only packaged petroleum products.

c. Class IV--Construction and barrier materiel such as sand bags and concertina wire.

d. Class V--Missile components only.

e. Class VII--Only selected major items such as radios and small electrical generators.

f. Class VIII--Medical and optical items.

g. Class IX--Repair parts.

8. DSS Customers. A DSS unit must be a SSA maintaining an authorized stockage list and authorized to requisition the items listed in paragraph 7 above. Examples of these SSAs are:

a. Supply, maintenance, and transportation units, both divisional and non-divisional.

b. Central issue facility.

c. Clothing sales stores.

d. Self-service supply centers.

e. Medical supply optical and maintenance (MEDSOM) units.

9. Distribution Depots.

a. Three distribution depots have been designated to distribute secondary items to all customers located in assigned geographic locations. They provide rapid response to customer requirements by having available those items most frequently requested. Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pennsylvania (DDSP), supports the eastern states, Europe, Middle East, and Central and South America. Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, California (DDJC), supports the western states, Alaska, and Pacific ocean areas. Defense Distribution Depot Red River, Texas (DDRT), supports the central states.

b. DDSP and DDJC operate consolidation and containerization points (CCPs) where small item requisitions are consolidated with other requisitions for the same basic geographic areas. This enables the distribution depots to maximize container utilization and throughput service by loading SEAVANS and 463L pallets for overseas customers. Containerized shipments move through aerial and water ports directly to overseas SSAs, bypassing break bulk points when possible. Ideally full container loads will be shipped to single consignees; however, to achieve full container utilization, sequential loading or drop point loading of a single container for delivery to multiple consignees may be used.

c. Other distribution depots may ship full van/ 463L loads direct to one consignee provided sufficient materiel is accumulated in one day to economically fill the van/463L pallet. Less than full loads are sent to the distribution depot CCP for consolidation with other materiel.

d. Since 1982, wholesale distribution depots have been operating Unit Materiel Fielding Points (UMFPs) to support the Total Package Fielding concept for new equipment. As part of the materiel distribution control process, UMFPs provide consolidated support packages of equipment and materiel along with the major end item being fielded to the gaining command. The UMFPs receive and consolidate associated support items of equipment; authorized stockage list/prescribed load list items; test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment; special tools; and technical publications. When the UMFP is notified to ship the support package to an overseas customer, the consolidated package is moved through the DSS system, either by SEAVAN or ALOC.

10. Requisition and Materiel Flow.

a. Requisitions flow from overseas or CONUS SSAs to the Materiel Management Center (MMC) or the CONUS ISD for editing the validity of supply data, funding, and fill rate data in accordance with prescribed fill/pass logic. The MMC or ISD transmits the requisitions through the Defense Automatic Addressing System (DAAS) for routing to the appropriate ICP. The ICP transmits a materiel release order through the DAAS to the distribution depot serving the requesting customer. The depot selects the materiel, consolidates when possible, sends a materiel release confirmation through the DAAS to the ICP, and ships the materiel to an installation Central Receiving Point (CRP).

b. The CRP, operated by the Directorate of Logistics, receives and distributes materiel to most units located on the installation and processes receipt documentation. The CRP receives all shipments of DSS materiel from commercial vendors, parcel post, and mixed shipments of both DSS and non-DSS materiel. In most cases where all materiel on a particular conveyance are for one or a few customers, the materiel is delivered directly, after being checked by the CRP, to the customer which requested the materiel. The CRP reports the arrival of the conveyance and the SSA reports the receipt of the materiel.

c. An image copy of the initial requisition passing through the DAAS is also routed to the Logistics Support Activity for inclusion into the Logistic Intelligence File (LIF). All subsequent transactions relating to this requisition are also routed to the LIF to provide current status and visibility of the requisition.

11. Wartime Operations.

a. In general, DSS will operate in wartime as it does in peacetime. Overseas theater stocks are minimized with the majority of stocks located in CONUS, making these stocks less vulnerable to enemy destruction or seizure and allowing the theater commander to employ his available personnel and materiel resources in fighting the war. CONUS units deploying into the theater will remain on DSS unless they have a repair parts supply mission, in which case they may become designated an ALOC unit. The theater commander will identify these units prior to deployment and recommend to Department of the Army that their requisitions be processed under ALOC criteria. Updated theater distribution route plans will be provided to the supporting CONUS distribution depot for consolidation planning changes.

b. During the early stages of war, air and sea lines of communication may be unavailable for short periods of time. Many of the high priority requisitions from overseas may be filled from Army reserve war stocks (ARWS) owned and managed by the Army Materiel Command. Replenishment and/or high priority requisitions not filled by ARWS will be passed on to CONUS for fill. Specific doctrine for throughput distribution to forward DSUs using theater transportation assets will be incorporated in theater operating procedures.

12. Advantages of DSS Over Standard Supply System.

a. DSS saves costs by reducing both inventories and facilities in oversea and CONUS installation supply operations. This also reduces the number of personnel required in logistics troop support functions.

b. Lower overseas stockage levels reduce the threat of a terrorist attack or capture of U.S. materiel.

c. DSS improves requisition response time and enhances unit materiel readiness. This is accomplished by fast delivery from CONUS distribution depots using state-of-the-art packaging, handling, and communications.

d. DSS materiel has full visibility during movement through the use of the Logistic Intelligence File.

e. Consolidated and containerized materiel moving through the DSS are less likely to be pilfered and damaged.

13. Disadvantages of DSS.

a. Tactical commanders do not have large installation stockpiles of supplies and must rely on expeditious support from CONUS wholesale depots.

b. Expeditious handling and reduced OST requires effective planning of transportation assets to fully use pallets and containers during both supply and retrograde operations.

c. Wartime execution requires air and sea superiority.

14. Impacts DSS Has on Logistics Functions.

a. Item managers at ICPs must have visibility of quantities on hand and procurement lead times to prevent DSS materiel from reaching a zero balance.

b. Materiel readiness and troop welfare are totally dependent on all distribution echelons doing their jobs within the standards of performance.

c. Actions at each echelon must be reported into the LIF to provide visibility of requisitions and to permit evaluation of the entire distribution pipeline.

d. Since the majority of DSS requisitions are for small quantities, both depot and ICP workloads are high. Small volume, lightweight, individual customer shipments are the norm, rather than bulk high-tonnage field depot replenishment shipments. Consolidation of requisitions must be effective and efficient.

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